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Concept, Conversion, Cultivation, and Consequence: The Four Cs of Successful Collaboration

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Space and Organizational Considerations in Academic Library Partnerships and Collaborations

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Chapter 13

Concept, Conversion, Cultivation, and Consequence: The Four Cs of Successful Collaboration

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ABSTRACT

In an effort to change the librarian-faculty collaboration culture at Nicholls State University, librarians actively sought grant opportunities to make resources available to the university which would facilitate collaboration. Nicholls was able to secure grant funding for a collaborative multidisciplinary research workshop series to promote undergraduate research. The objective of this grant funded opportunity was to place the library in a central role in the enhancement and expansion of the university's research initiatives and partner with those disciplines that were traditionally self-contained. The technology and training made available to students through this initiative is important as it provides all students with access to foundational training and necessary technology to be competitive in academia and the workforce. Through these long-term partnerships forged with research focused disciplines, the library is now able to demonstrate its capacity to serve as an integral component of university research initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

Librarians and teaching faculty at Nicholls State University have partnered to create a sustainable grant-funded series of research workshops that promote research at the undergraduate and graduate level, as well as collaboration among faculty at the inter-departmental, inter-collegiate, and campus-wide level. This chapter will describe in detail the collaboration established between faculty and librarians on research workshops and will include a description of collaboration, the tenets or four C's of collaboration (concept, conversion, cultivation and consequence) that guided the initiative, and some tips and tricks that were learned along the way.

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BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically at Nicholls State University, a genuine collaborative culture did not exist between faculty and librarians. However, through librarian service and involvement on the University's Research Week committee, a common organizational objective was identified. Librarians and faculty saw an opportunity to work together to promote, enhance, and enlarge the technology, instruction, and research of students at Nicholls State University and promote one of the university's five strategic goals to "cultivate research that engages faculty and students seeking knowledge in areas of common interest." The resulting research workshop series discussed in detail in this chapter is the result of a concentrated and truly collaborative effort between teaching faculty and librarians.

Importance of Collaboration

Academic librarians have the opportunity to influence higher education through collaboration with teaching faculty. This is because "librarians are on the edges of research, on the first threshold where the researcher has an idea or a hunch about something but needs a guide to navigate the waters of inquiry" (Raspa & Ward, 2000, p. 6). Librarians are trained to serve as guides that often help to shape a research query and lead a student or researcher to appropriate information sources. Collaboration is an imperative at an academic university because it maximizes available resources during lean economic times.

Definition of Collaboration

Obtaining a high level of lasting and effective collaboration between academic librarians and teaching faculty is the unicorn that all academic librarians try to corral during their careers. In theory, collaboration should not be difficult to achieve, but in reality the process of collaboration is often riddled with barriers that can be difficult to overcome. In order to understand the process of collaboration, it is helpful to look at how various researchers define this term.

According to Raspa and Ward (2000), "Collaboration...is a more structured relationship that is created to solve a common problem. Collaboration goes beyond coordination by adding a structure that ensures a desired alliance actually meets its goal" (p. 27). In effect, collaboration is the highest level at which parties operate to solve a problem. Mattessich (2001) further expands the definition by saying collaboration is "a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards" (p. 59). Mattessich's definition, with its emphasis on mutual relationships and goals along with shared authority and accountability, serves as the basis for the collaboration discussed in this chapter.

Barriers to Collaboration

Barriers to collaboration can be both multi-faceted and difficult to pinpoint. People must put forth effort, time, and desire in order to collaborate successfully; when these are lacking in any capacity, collaboration can be difficult.

Lack of effort can easily sidetrack a collaborative project. Just as faculty have numerous demands placed upon them through their teaching, research, and service requirements, librarians in academic institutions also face the same demands as faculty but oftentimes have the added responsibility of administration of a department and personnel management. With so much to do, the amount of effort that goes into a collaborative project can be less than ideal because faculty and librarians feel their time is spread too thin. Unfortunately, in higher education faculty and librarians are consistently tasked with providing more services with fewer resources; this ultimately minimizes the amount of effort they are able to put forth into each of their responsibilities.

Universally, time constraints are often a barrier for successful collaborations. At academic institutions, this is especially the case with faculty as they are often pressed for time “with responsibilities for multiple courses, many students, research activities, committee duties, and more” (Bell & Shank, 2007, p. 68). Because of the value of “face time” between faculty and students, faculty are less likely to invite librarians into the classroom for instructional sessions. Bell and Shank (2007) go on to ask the question “how can faculty find the time to learn about and use our [library] resources as well as design instructional opportunities for students to use them creatively?” (p. 68). This is an important question librarians need to ask themselves. Nicholls State University librarians meet this challenge by offering workshops designed for faculty instruction on the various resources, old and new, available at the library. These workshops are given at the beginning of the semester at a “Faculty Institute;” throughout the semester at the Center for Advancing Faculty Engagement (CAFE), a space dedicated to promoting faculty-led workshops; and at the library itself. Other means for promoting the library resources include a newsletter published in the spring and fall and by email updates sent by liaison librarians to faculty throughout the year.

In order for collaboration to take place, librarians and faculty must first desire to work with one another. Even though librarians have much to offer faculty, faculty often do not seek these resources, either because they prefer to work independently or else they are unaware of what is available.

According to Christiansen, Stompler, and Thaxton (2004), there is an asymmetrical disconnect present between librarians and faculty even though both are mutually dependent upon one another for success.

Libraries encourage a culture of sharing, cooperation, and collaboration, for the ultimate purpose of assisting students in their educational pursuits. Part of what defines librarianship is ‘reaching out’ to library users (students, faculty, and others) to better serve them. By contrast, faculty culture is generally more isolated and proprietary (Christensen, Strombler, & Thaxton 2004, p. 118).

For librarians, the disconnect between librarians and faculty is seen as an interference in achieving work goals. Faculty acknowledge the disconnect that is present; however, they do not see it as problematic because they are essentially unaware of what they are missing either because they do not know what services are available to them, or they do not understand what a librarian’s duties actually entail.

Although librarians and faculty must desire to work together, librarians can do a disservice to faculty when they accept faculty requests that are inappropriate for meeting students’ needs. In the article, “Not at Your Service: Building Genuine Faculty-Librarian Partnerships,” Meulemans and Carr (2013) posit that librarians should decline faculty requests that are not in the best interest of students and rather engage the faculty member in a conversation in the ways the librarian can facilitate a learning environment that will have the most impact on student learning. Sometimes the best form of collaboration between librarians and faculty is when librarians redirect faculty requests.

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Overall, the most important means for cultivating collaboration between librarians and faculty is in developing relationships between them. Oftentimes, librarians assume that if the programs and services which the library offers were marketed better, faculty would be more apt to participate in the programs and have librarians in their classrooms for instructional sessions. In reality, however, the success of a program or initiative rests with the quality of the relationships that individual librarians have with their faculty (Meulemans & Carr, 2013, p. 84). Without those established relationships with faculty, collaborations can be difficult to get off the ground.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Collaboration Philosophy at Nicholls State University: Where We Started From

In 2009, fellow Nicholls State University librarians Fonseca and Viator published an article titled “Escaping the Island of Lost Faculty: Collaboration as a Means of Visibility” that gives a snapshot of the collaborative philosophy that was prevalent at Nicholls until 2013. Through their study, Fonseca and Viator first were able to pinpoint the struggle academic librarians face to attain visibility and credibility with teaching faculty at their institution. They pose the question, “How does the academic librarian—the minimized, marginalized, forgotten faculty member – become visible (and hopefully perceived as valuable) on his or her campus and possibly in the larger academic community?” Their answer to this question, and the point of this study, are one in the same: “In one word, *collaboration* is the answer” (Fonseca & Viator, 2009, p. 82).

This can be accomplished through presentations, publications in multidisciplinary journals, membership in professional organizations outside of librarianship, and university committee participation that is active and vocal. Fonseca and Viator note the importance of librarians volunteering to assist in grant writing with non-library faculty or community groups in an effort to increase the visibility of academic librarians. The logic of a librarian assisting in a grant proposal was that if the project was funded, “the chances are excellent that the librarian’s contribution will be recognized in the university’s publications, and possibly even in local media sources, giving visibility to both the librarian and the library – all helping to establish the professional, faculty-level status of librarians” (Fonseca & Viator, 2009, p. 86). Through these collaborative imperatives, Fonseca and Viator feel that academic librarians are able to redefine themselves as scholar librarians.

According to their article, Fonseca and Viator (2009) equate the visibility of academic librarians at Nicholls to collaboration. For them, collaboration means communication and sharing of responsibility. The authors of this chapter, however, argue that Fonseca and Viator’s view of collaboration requires more comprehensive development in order to be effective. Fonseca and Viator present a librarian’s primary contribution to collaboration as being an available resource to faculty. Fonseca and Viator fail to make the leap between serving as a conduit for a project and actually being a vested project partner with shared workload, goals, and responsibilities. In order to have a true collaborative environment exist on the university campus, librarians must use their skills to become a key component in all stages of the project’s development, execution, and assessment.

Fonseca and Viator also emphasized that librarians and faculty should collaborate on publications and service projects, but failed to emphasize the more important type of collaboration that could take place in the classroom with students. Publishing and service projects, although worthy collaborative

efforts, still place librarians as the “other” faculty who are not highly involved in the daily work or research projects of students.

Changing the culture of an institution takes time and effort and the visibility of librarian faculty at Nicholls State University remained constant due to service on university committees. In 2009, Fonseca and Viator introduced important ideas that started the momentum for change between librarians and faculty at Nicholls. They urged their fellow academic librarians to determine their own future through redefining expectations of themselves and adopting new attitudes. In response to this in 2013, academic librarians at Nicholls pursued a grant opportunity that allowed them to launch further changes in partnership between librarians and faculty. Overall, these changes redefined the librarian’s role at the university according to the four C’s of collaboration: concept, cultivation, conversion, and consequence. These four C’s act as guiding principles when approaching collaborative projects at all levels, but especially between librarians and faculty. The four C’s also serve as a framework to help illustrate how this collaboration was born, evolved, and was ultimately a success.

Concept: Planting the Seed and Developing the Grant

In the past, librarians focused their grant writing efforts specifically on projects that would strictly enhance the library’s collections or bring programming to the library. However, four years after Fonseca and Viator published their article on collaboration, academic librarians at Nicholls decided to pursue grant opportunities to make resources available to the university which would more readily facilitate cooperation and collaboration on a larger scale. If librarians are valuable as grant writing partners, those same librarians, who often hold advanced degrees in more than one discipline, can also be instrumental in the implementation and execution of grant projects. With this mindset, librarians began to pursue grant opportunities that would best facilitate collaboration across disciplines; they also sought to place themselves into the projects that they sought to fund. Librarians no longer aimed to solely establish their faculty-level status through participation on the fringes of the grant project; instead, they sought to make themselves a centralized and integral component to the project and its success.

Time and again, the seed of an idea can be planted but won’t germinate until the conditions are right. Specifically, in 2013, a grant opportunity provided the ideal climate for the planted idea to flourish and grow. Nicholls librarians along with various faculty members formed a collaboration to apply for a grant opportunity presented by the Louisiana Board of Regents.¹

Over the last several years, librarians worked diligently to create a more visible presence across the university campus and build relationships with faculty from various disciplines through service on all university committees. The librarian-faculty collaboration was formed when a librarian and science faculty member made contact through serving on a committee for Nicholls’ annual Research Week.

At Nicholls State University, Research Week is held every spring to showcase and encourage undergraduate and graduate research being conducted at the university. The university’s Office of Research and Sponsored Programs initiated Research Week to highlight research being done through a Brown Bag Faculty Speaker Series and a student poster competition showcasing undergraduate and graduate research.

Together, the librarian and faculty member decided to prepare a proposal to submit to the Louisiana Board of Regents that would fund much-needed technological updates to a common-use multipurpose room located in the library that could be used to host a series of research workshops; the grant money could also be used to purchase software and equipment identified as being essential to competitive student research.

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When planning to write the grant, it was very important to choose a location that was in neutral territory so that one discipline was not seen as having an advantage over another in regards to room usage or technology usage. Since the library is centrally located on the university campus and had an available meeting room, it was decided the library was the best facility to host the updated room and equipment. Another factor as to why the library was chosen to have oversight of the equipment was because the library staff would be available during extended hours to provide students access, a prime component of the grant award.

The formation of the proposal idea did not happen overnight. The two faculty members worked for two months to brainstorm workshop components, technology needs, and faculty contacts that would be the most useful and beneficial to students participating in the research workshops, Research Week, and other research-related projects. By the end of August 2013, a solidified idea was formed and ready to be pursued.

During September, the Board of Regents held a program manager meeting where prospective applicants could ask questions regarding their proposal to Board of Regents representatives who gave insight on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal idea. Prior to this meeting, the librarian was going to take on the role of the principal investigator (PI) of the grant because of the use of library facilities and the library's housing of equipment and technology. After receiving feedback from the panel, the librarian found that having a PI from one of the eligible disciplines would strengthen the proposal. As a result, the science faculty member took over as the grant's principal investigator; at that point, the actual grant writing process could begin.

The grant application was due to the Board of Regents by the end of October; however, Nicholls' Office of Research and Sponsored Programs required that any committee submitting a grant needed to meet an early October deadline to have the grant routed for internal review at the university. The exceptionally early internal deadline led to a divide and conquer mentality amongst the two co-grant writers. It was decided that the library faculty member would work on the narrative portions of the grant while the science faculty member would construct a budget, including obtaining quotes for technology, determining matching funds, and approaching additional grant defined discipline-specific faculty members to pledge their support to the grant proposal.

To assess interest in a renovated and updated common use multipurpose room located in the library, the grant writers surveyed faculty members online. Sixty-one percent (61%) of responding faculty stated that they would use the enhanced technologies of the multipurpose room for research-related classes. Faculty members were also surveyed to gauge interest in and whether they would recommend the research workshop series to students enrolled in their research courses. Sixty-two percent (62%) of faculty stated they would recommend and possibly require their students to attend the research workshop series.

It was also decided that trial research workshops should be conducted that could be included in the grant proposal to highlight the usefulness and applicability of the workshops. These workshops were conducted in the hopes of demonstrating the viability and applicability of the research program proposal to the Board of Regents. An additional librarian and faculty member were brought on board to help facilitate the pre-submission research workshops, thus forming the core team on this grant project.

One of the research workshops was titled "What Do Mathematicians Do? A (Hopefully) Gentle Introduction to Research in the Mathematical Sciences," and a library faculty member presented "Navigating the Library and Its Resources" to the Fall 2013 honors forum course. This particular course was targeted because the honors forum focuses on the interdisciplinary nature of the honors program at Nicholls, which is the second largest honors program in the state of Louisiana. Students enrolled in this course

are from a wide range of disciplines including biological sciences, psychology, allied health, business administration, math education, and many more. After the workshops, students in the honors forum were surveyed and the majority of students found the workshops to be beneficial. The majority of students also indicated that they would attend proposed workshops particularly if sessions were related to coursework and development of research and presentation skills. Buoyed by the feedback from faculty surveys and student workshop evaluations, the grant authors felt confident that the proposed workshop series and technological enhancements would bring great value to undergraduate research.

Unfortunately during this time, the grant ran into a few roadblocks concerning the originally proposed format of the research workshops. Initially, the proposal intended to outline a multi-year workshop series, but because of feedback received during the Board of Regents program manager meeting, the timeline of the workshop's implementation needed to be condensed into a single year in order to be more successful for funding. A meeting was held with the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences to see if solutions could be found. The dean proved to be a strong advocate for the grant proposal as he was personally very research-oriented and could see the positive effects the grant would provide. The dean supported the revised implementation schedule and also strongly encouraged faculty members from specific disciplines to participate in these workshops in order to demonstrate the university-wide relevance of the grant proposal. With the dean's backing, more faculty members were aware of and willing to participate in the workshops that would be funded with the grant money. The writers also strengthened the proposal by designing the workshops in a format that would fit the timeframe parameters stipulated by the grant funding agency.

During the first week of October, further quotes on equipment and technology needs were acquired, co-principal investigators were approached and confirmed for all the grant's eligible disciplines, letters of support from administrative heads across campus were obtained, and a rough draft of the grant proposal was submitted to the university for routing and approval internally.

For the rest of the month, the proposal was continuously edited, fine-tuned, and eventually finalized for submission to the Louisiana Board of Regents. Finally, the proposal was submitted at the end of October.

Once a grant proposal is submitted, there is often a long period of waiting for a response from the grant agency. In the case of this grant, notification of the award did not occur until April 2014, almost ten months after the process was initiated. To the writers' delight, the Louisiana Board of Regents recognized the value of the proposal and the grant was fully funded. Now the university would have the funds to institute a collaborative multidisciplinary research workshop series to promote undergraduate research and provide access to hands-on training and guidance from faculty.

Implementing the Grant

Through grant support, the research infrastructure of the university has been enhanced and provides more opportunities for research participation and support to both students and faculty. The grant also helps to "cultivate research that engages faculty and students seeking knowledge in areas of common interest," one of the strategic goals of the university. This is achieved in a new and novel way by placing the library in a centralized role in the enhancement and expansion of the university's research initiatives while making the library a partner with those disciplines that were traditionally self-contained.

With grant funds available to equip a centralized library multipurpose room with updated technology and the ability to purchase equipment to be used for research presentations, grant funds were utilized to provide the technological support necessary to conduct research workshops and provide a technologi-

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cally up-to-date presentation and teaching facility. The impact of the technology and training supplied through grant funding reaches across the entire university. Students and faculty have the ability to check-out laptops with updated software for image and video manipulation and the ability to create research presentations (oral, poster, or written); they can also check out portable projectors and sturdy, drafting quality poster carriers, to aid in presenting their research. With the updated technology, software, and training, faculty are now equipped to provide enhanced instruction in courses and workshops to increase student accessibility to research and to improve the quality of student research and presentations.

In order to measure whether these initiatives are being effective at the university, the grant committee must accomplish the following objectives:

1. Provide a multidisciplinary research workshop series to foster and promote undergraduate research and to provide access to research project and presentation review and critique.
2. Increase participation in on-campus research competitions/symposia, in particular increase participation by students enrolled in astronomy, business, chemistry, education, mathematics, and physics courses.

To measure the first objective, the grant authors track student participation in the research workshop series by major and will award certificates to students who participate in three or more research workshops. In order to assess the success of the initial workshop, it will be necessary to determine if Research Week student poster competition winners attended the research workshop series or review and critique sessions and if so, how many workshops/sessions the winners attend.

To measure the second objective, the grant authors track student participation in the three on-campus research competitions/symposia by major. The target participation levels were set for at least one major from each eligible discipline to participate in one of the three on-campus research competitions/symposia. The authors are awaiting final results as the first full research workshop series cycle is still underway.

Conversion: Learning How to Go with the Flow

The best laid plans do not always materialize when working on a large scale project. Oftentimes, it is important to recognize that change will be a constant factor that needs to be addressed. This became apparent to the authors when dealing with faculty participation on the grant project.

When targeting faculty for recruitment for the grant proposal, it was important to have faculty from each grant-eligible discipline agree to participate in the proposed research workshop series. This was important because Research Week is a program that students from all disciplines are eligible to participate in, and students from the targeted disciplines had all participated in past Research Week competitions. Biological sciences, business, chemistry, education, mathematics, and physics/astronomy students have consistently been represented in Research Week competitions since the start of the program.

For the grant application, eight faculty members from the targeted disciplines agreed to support the application and provide information on classes that would be urged to participate. These faculty members also agreed that they would host workshops as needed. In reality, however, only one faculty member and one librarian were actively involved in writing the grant. The original team of eight rapidly shrank to four active members when it came time to implement the workshop series. These four members have continued to serve as the heart of the project and consistently work to publicize, grow, and perfect the workshops.

This example of the “revolving door” of faculty buy-in and involvement highlights the strengths and weaknesses inherent in this collaboration. In order for the collaboration to succeed, personal relationships amongst faculty had to be cultivated with those faculty members who have a vested interest in the project. Librarians are asked to do more with faculty, such as become judges alongside teaching faculty for the annual Research Week poster competition. Librarians become value-added players that can assist in areas beyond traditional reference question help and are able to convert their role in the university into a more integrated and vital one that is part of the research work of the departments.

When seeking faculty partners on a project similar to this, it is imperative to enlist the help of a research-heavy faculty member whose main focus is hands-on research. This type of faculty ally is more likely to remain involved in the long-term because he/she also has the constant stream of research-focused students who are more likely to participate in research events. It is also more likely that a faculty member entrenched in research will bring enthusiasm for research and help to propel the project.

The research workshop series was built upon inter-departmental collaboration at the college level as well as interdisciplinary collaboration across the university. Across-campus, across-discipline collaboration can be a daunting prospect. In the lean, conservative fiscal environment in which many academic libraries find themselves, the ability to leverage grant opportunities to not only bring students more resources but resources that are integrative and tailored to them is a feat that every academic librarian aims to achieve. This aim also helps to sell the idea of collaboration to those faculty members who may otherwise not be receptive.

The authors, two librarians from different departments within the library, were tasked with executing and supporting the grant. One librarian serves as the government information librarian as well as the library’s resident grant writer, and the other is a research/instruction librarian able to provide the bibliographic instruction and information literacy component. Two faculty members from the Biological Sciences Department were also part of the core team. This helped to even out the playing field and also allowed both the librarians and the scientists to bring their own unique skill-set to the project. Ideas could be fleshed out with a colleague who could understand the rationale behind the idea, could support and understand the ultimate goal of the project, and assist in the demanding workload. Having the “mini-teams” from both the library and biological sciences helped form a fully functional collaboration which bridged the usual academic divide normally present between librarians and faculty.

The core collaborative team responsible for this project ran the gamut of personality types, but what became clear to the authors was that despite these personality differences, the successes of both the collaboration and the project were tied to the cognitive flexibility and cognitive communication skills present amongst group members. These two components are what lead to, and drive, successful, synergistic relationships that in turn affect how efficacious initiatives and programs will ultimately be.

Cognitive flexibility and communication are strong indicators of how people will act when collaborating with others in decision-making situations. Cognitive flexibility is defined by cognitive psychologists as the ability to adapt to certain situations and passing from one thought to another; or the capacity of looking at different problems with multilateral strategies (Gunduz, 2013). Cognitive flexibility “refers to a person’s (a) awareness that in any given situation there are options and alternatives available, (b) willingness to be flexible and adapt to the situation, and (c) self-efficacy in being flexible” (Martin, 1998, p. 532). Cognitive communication refers to an individual’s knowledge and ability to communicate properly in a specific situation, adapt communication behaviors for varied contexts and interactions, and reflect after those interactions (Dunleavy, 2006, p. 340).

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While cognitive flexibility and cognitive communication aid in collaboration, all collaborative partners must additionally exhibit the four behaviors that are essential for successful collaboration. Ivey (2003), building upon Schrage's findings of interactive patterns, lists numerous variables. Of these, the authors find four to be essential for success in collaboration:

1. Competence for task at hand by each of the partners.
2. Shared, understood goal.
3. Mutual respect, tolerance and trust.
4. Ongoing communication.

Of these four, the authors argue that competency shared by all partners for the task at hand is extremely crucial, not only for fruitful collaboration, but for a successful end-product. Each player in the research workshop series brought in expertise from his/her respective field and had a true grasp of the final product as well as his/her role in its completion. If not for such high levels of competency, this cross-disciplinary collaboration would have been much more difficult and unproductive. The authors also argue that the remaining three behaviors as laid out by Ivey fall into place after, and because of, competency. These four behaviors harken back to Mattessich's definition of collaboration cited at the beginning of the chapter because both emphasize the importance of shared goals, mutual accountability, and respect.

Students who otherwise might not have utilized the library become users because of the connection made between the workshops, research assistance, librarians, and the library in general as a resource provider. Students then also see librarians interact with teaching faculty which helps to give librarians legitimacy to students and create an environment of openness in which those students are more likely to independently seek out librarians for assistance on research projects.

A major drawback or weakness inherent in this project deals with time. This particular project is one that is ongoing and requires long-term dedication and involvement from faculty. The large time commitment can hamper participation from faculty who may already feel over-worked and pressed for time. Faculty who participate must give up their time to lead sessions, and those faculty who would like their classes to participate as a whole, must give up precious class time to conduct the workshops.

When there are numerous faculty involved in a project, accountability can be difficult because faculty are more likely to opt-out of tasks due to a perceived safety net in numbers. The danger of the supposed safety net lies in thinking that someone else can easily step in and complete the task. This was apparent when the core group of eight faculty members quickly dropped to four. Finally, there are some faculty members whose commitment only extends to getting a line in their vitae. With the pressure of achieving tenure towering over faculty, many faculty over-commit to various projects and then are unable to follow through with all of their obligations. In the end, faculty may easily agree to lend their support to the project when it is in its development stages. This early support does not always convert into lasting collaborative relationships once the real work of the project begins.

Ultimately, there is no clear answer to obtaining and keeping the involvement of faculty. The question that will always arise and need to be answered is, "What's in it for me?" If faculty can see a direct and tangible value in giving of their time and skills for the project, they are more likely to participate.

Cultivation: How to Reap the Benefits from Workshop Exposure

After nurturing the seed that was planted in the initial concept of the grant project, the librarians realized that an opportunity had grown to reach students in a specific capacity that was never present prior to the research workshop series initiated by the grant. The workshop format was a valuable innovation because the librarians recognized that library instruction is not beneficial in every classroom scenario. It would be a dream-scenario for librarians to work their way into every class to reach as many students as possible, but the reality is that until the students need librarians, such as when they are working on papers or doing research for posters, it can all be in vain. By hosting a workshop on general “research” at various times, librarians hope to reach students who might otherwise not have the opportunity to have librarians in the classroom. In the end, however, it remains the student’s responsibility to attend and be an active participant in the research process or instructional session.

Winch and Hunter (2007), in describing their collaboration on utilizing student poster projects to promote information literacy in biology courses, reflect that

Collaboration required mutual recognition of differing disciplinary perspectives, points-of-view, and vocabularies that sometimes resulted in communication difficulties and frustrations [...] The poster project reinforced our commitment to developing curriculum that teaches students how biology uses information and why library resources support their particular poster topic. We learned to teach research skills so that the products (i.e. assignments) were of better quality and better matched the expectations of faculty. (p. 155)

In line with Winch and Hunter’s experience, the participation of two science faculty and two library faculty led to a team-teaching environment where information literacy skills were seamlessly paired with the fundamentals of science-based research. Through this team-teaching atmosphere in the workshops, general poster creation sessions, and poster critique sessions, the faculty and librarians were able to meld different topics to assist students in producing more competitive posters based on enhanced research skills and design elements.

As originally planned, the grant project utilized the library’s multipurpose room because the room was a centralized space that was available to house the updated technology that was purchased with grant funds. The centralized location also was key so that one discipline was not perceived as taking advantage of the space and technology. The research component of the project was focused on research poster production, but through various workshops, librarians were able to “sneak in” an information literacy component. As the workshop series progressed, librarians honed several workshops into information literacy-heavy and research-heavy classes that were targeted to specific disciplines of students who were participating. Although not explicitly stated, librarians approached the workshop sessions with information literacy standards, as stated by the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), in mind. These standards outline user’s ability to determine, access, evaluate, and use (both effectively and ethically) information (ACRL, 2000). By utilizing these standards as a framework for instruction, librarians were able to instill basic, yet far-reaching, information literacy skills and maxims in an effort to excite, expound, and explain the beauty and intricacies of research.

The two librarians approached the workshops with the idea of showcasing the resources available to students, but also used them to target and fight misinformation or information illiteracy amongst students. It was especially important to the librarians to use this coveted opportunity with students and

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their research, as the workshop and learning outcomes would “stick” because of the tangible end-product that the students were working on: their research poster. The librarians involved in the project function with the idea that information literacy has long-term lasting power only when the student can relate to what is being taught by connecting it to something of value to the student; in coarser terms, the student is invested only when it matters to him/her (paper, project, grade, etc.). Overviews held in the general classroom setting do not have the same impact as working with students on a particular project that interests them. The librarians also find a more student-driven and proactive setting in the workshops where the information is being absorbed by students who voluntarily attend due to the pertinence to their research. As a final product, research posters and the resulting competition during Research Week were chosen because as MacMillan (2010) points out, posters by their very nature provide an explicit opportunity to explore actual research that in turn bolsters understanding of the subject at hand with the added benefits of promoting independent, analytical thought.

Research shows that the information literacy skills of students in both secondary and postsecondary educational environments remain an area of concern, and many students are below proficient in terms of their information literacy skills. Often times, students believe they are proficient in library skills, but in reality they are well below where they should be. Gross and Latham (2011) refer to this as the Dunning-Kruger Effect, that is the miscalibration between self-views of skill and actual skill. One implication of the Dunning-Kruger Effect is that “individuals with below-proficient skills are unlikely to seek remediation for skills they believe they have, and that because they have a high level of confidence in their ability, they are unlikely to seek help, even when their attempts at finding information fail or result in low-quality information or partial answers” (Gross and Latham, 2011, p. 574). For these reasons, universities need to provide further instructional support to students in the areas of research and library science.

Kruger and Dunning in their 1999 article titled “Unskilled and Unaware of It” open with a humorous anecdote that illustrates the challenges people face when they are unaware of their academic deficiencies. Kruger and Dunning begin the article with the tale of a sadly misinformed bank robber who rubbed lemon juice on his face instead of wearing a disguise to shield his identity while robbing a bank. His decision was based on the advice of two friends and a botched test photo that seemingly corroborated his invisibility, but was most likely due to damaged film or his misuse of the camera. The criminal’s error of misinformation obviously led to his arrest and brought a swift end to his criminal career. The image of the misinformed bank robber allows Kruger and Dunning to illustrate a very important point. “When people are incompetent in the strategies they adopt to achieve success and satisfaction, they suffer a dual burden: not only do they reach erroneous conclusions and make unfortunate choices, but their incompetence robs them of the ability to realize it” (Kruger & Dunning, 1999, p. 1121). These are mistakes librarians and faculty alike wish to train university students to avoid.

Sometimes students miscalculate their abilities because they have not been trained to perceive the complexity of the research process; they have grown up as a technology-savvy generation, and to them, this is equitable to proficiency in the skills needed for their library research. Salaway, et. al. (2008) second this idea by saying “students may have confidence because they are unaware of the complexity...or just because they have grown up with the technology. This potential gap between actual and perceived skills and literacy is important to understand and to factor into strategies for teaching and learning” (p. 11). Therefore, as part of the instructional process, librarians and faculty must expose students to their gaps in their research abilities.

In order to encourage students to pursue a richer research process, librarians and faculty needed to begin forming relationships with students so that they would be more receptive to growth. For this

reason, the workshops at Nicholls were designed to allow librarians to interact with students on a level that promotes positive relationships between librarians and students. “The active engagement of the faculty in answering students’ content-specific questions during library instruction sessions can help to reinforce the importance of the librarian’s role” (Gandhi, 2004, p. 19). Librarians were present at every workshop, including research poster critique sessions. With the continual support of the project and the proven information literacy skills in previous “test workshops,” the series began to change into more library-led information literacy sessions focused on particular disciplines with the original faculty supporting the sessions by being present and collaboratively teaching about research methods. Ultimately, the close interaction between librarians and students allows librarians to address the gap that may exist between what students “think” they know and what knowledge they actually possess.

Combining the instructional forces of librarians and faculty remains a relatively innovative approach as the prevailing attitude in higher education tends to place librarians and faculty as experts of separate disciplines (i.e. library skills and skills of a specific discipline). Ivey (2003) reinforces this idea by saying “most of the librarians and a few academics appeared to see information literacy as a discipline in itself and the responsibility for teaching many of the aspects as lying primarily with either academics or librarians, depending on whether, in their opinion, the aspects related to the subject discipline or user education” (p. 104). However, in the workshops at Nicholls, librarians and faculty worked together to educate student participants on research methods and principles. Librarians were given the floor to showcase various resources provided by the library, but faculty gave input during this as well as their own “tips and tricks” as to how to work within a specific database, or how to figure out key index terms, etc. This librarian-faculty collaboration greatly enhanced students’ exposure to research in their subject area, ultimately equipping them with higher level academic skills.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Consequence: Everything That Comes After

After the grant’s test period was complete, the participation of students attending the workshops and competing in Research Week was compared. A definite correlation and cross-over from workshop attendance to research competition participation is beginning to be evidenced even without the full cycle of workshops being completed to date. Based on past data, for the upcoming workshop series, there is an expectation of increased involvement in both workshops and in the Research Week competition. Along with the upturn in participation, the number and variety of disciplines of students is also expected to increase. Ideally, all students that compete in Research Week should attend at least one research workshop prior to participating in the poster competition. Continued growth of undergraduate engagement in research and research-related events is the long-term and ultimate goal for this program. Research Week will continue to serve as a solid base measure to track this growth of student participation with increases or decreases in the average number of students attending workshops helping to measure the success of the program. Evaluations by both faculty and students will be solicited for each individual workshop as well.

With the success of the original workshops on poster creation, presentation, and “How to Find a Research Project and What Support is Available to Me,” planning has begun for future workshops encompassing a variety of subjects. Some of these subjects include “Talk to a Student Researcher,” “Math

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Anxiety: A Barrier to Student Participation in Research,” “Talk to a Faculty Research Mentor,” “How Can I Collect Data for a Research Project,” “Intro to R for SAS, SPSS, and STATA Users,” as well as sessions where students can present research, posters, or written manuscripts for review and critique.

The majority of the proposed future workshops will be presented by university faculty members with the exceptions of the “Talk to a Student Researcher” workshop and the R software training. The “Talk to a Student Researcher” workshop will include brief overviews of research by students who participated in one or more of the on-campus research competitions or off-campus professional meetings; this will be followed by a question and answer session and one-on-one conversations fueled by pizza and soda in an effort to entice students to participate. The “Talk to a Faculty Research Mentor” will include short presentations by faculty members from a variety of disciplines who have mentored undergraduate research. This workshop will include a session of one-on-one conversations to allow students to develop research questions or hypotheses. The “How Can I Collect Data for a Research Project?” workshop will include brief presentations of completed student research and potential research questions or hypotheses related to a variety of coursework or faculty research. Faculty presenters will include mentors of research entered into on-campus competitions and symposia and off-campus professional meetings.

To further secure the foothold gained from this collaboration, librarians have continued to expand their efforts through active publicity including presentations at the Faculty Institute and the Center for Advancing Faculty Engagement (CAFÉ) series. This continued outreach is done in hopes of connecting faculty who may not be aware of the services being offered. These presentations garner attendance and attention, and hopefully will result in more faculty involvement. Workshops are advertised campus-wide through e-mailed newsletters, signs, and in-class announcements. Additionally, after students submit abstracts for a research competition or symposium, they receive the workshop series schedule from the event organizer and are made aware of the availability of review and critique sessions. A pool of faculty and staff (including members of the University Research Week Committee), authors of the grant proposal, and other interested faculty are also available to review and critique student presentations.

CONCLUSION

Tips from the Trenches

The partnership and collaboration formed as a result of the grant-funded program has been highly successful. This success was not easily earned, however, and many lessons were learned along the way.

First and foremost, a timeline is necessary to stay on task, yet delays are still inevitable. Whether dealing with the processing of funds and receipt of equipment orders, delays are par for the course. It is important for the grant committee to be familiar with the university’s purchasing rules and to keep in constant contact with the appropriate staff who can answer any questions that arise.

Commitment from all parties to the long-term success and continuation of the project are paramount. Without that commitment, the project will be short-lived. The “revolving door” of faculty buy-in is one that never stops turning. Committee members should welcome with open arms new faculty who want to participate while remaining professional with those who opt-out of the project. Future opportunities may arise from these experiences with faculty, and this could be the one chance to interact with them and showcase the skills librarians are able to contribute.

Through this collaborative experience, many lessons have been learned.

1. **Be Active:** Librarians need to take advantage of all opportunities to serve on university committees and engage in other university events. Being active does not simply mean being a member of a committee. Rather, active service includes engaged participation and willingness to serve in an officer capacity.
2. **Be Available:** In today's academic environment, librarians are often pressed for time but it is important to always be available to meet with faculty.
3. **Be Open:** New ideas and methods can be scary and off-putting at first but can also yield unforeseen improvements and opportunities. Be a "yes" person!
4. **Be Vigilant:** Opportunities for collaboration are more abundant than they may appear. Always have your eyes and ears open and be ready.
5. **Be Patient:** Patience is key. Patience is necessary when working on the project, working with faculty, and developing the overall relationship with faculty throughout the project. Nothing worthwhile happens overnight.
6. **Be Committed:** Sometimes the idea for the collaborative project is so enticing that many forget about the long road and hard work that will need to be done over the course of the collaboration. Be ready to see the project to the end and prepared to spend more time than originally planned. Always be willing to do whatever is asked or expected to achieve success.
7. **Be Vocal:** Be vocal about project needs and wants. Likewise, be vocal about successes through promoting the collaboration. Use those successes to promote the library's role to gain more opportunities for collaboration.

Ultimately and most importantly, it is important to remember that sometimes serendipity is an extremely important ingredient for collaborative success. Having the right grant opportunity, faculty partnerships, and university goals align is something that cannot be forced in order for the collaboration to be a success. Librarians should continue to be aware of opportunities and cultivate strong and meaningful relationships with faculty because a collaborative project can come from a number of avenues.

By being mindful and practicing the seven imperatives, successful collaboration is easier to attain because the imperatives provide a framework through which the four C's can be approached. The *concept* of a collaborative project is important because it brings together resources and ideas to build a stronger, more enhanced product that can have a more penetrating effect. The *conversion* necessary for successful collaboration occurs through the establishment of a core base of dedicated project partners who are open to new ideas from new players who will flow into and out of the project over time. *Cultivation* is achieved through the expertise of collaborative partners who serve as the architects of the project and build and develop a project that is most beneficial to students. The *consequence* of successful collaboration is the continued growth, development and dedication to the project.

After working through the collaborative process and emerging with a functional and successful product that is being woven into the institutional fabric of Nicholls State University, the chapter authors recognize that the four C's – concept, conversion, cultivation, and consequence – have been the guiding tenets of the collaborative experience.

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The four C's will continue to guide the workshops as they grow, flourish, and evolve because the nature of the workshops is not static. Continual evolution will happen as the students and faculty participating in and guiding the workshops will change. The workshops, however, are self-sustaining as long as librarians and faculty are willing to impart their knowledge and time to de-mystify the research process.

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KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Cognitive Communication: Ability to communicate with empathy.

Cognitive Flexibility: The ability to think on your feet in different situations, recognize viable options, and be flexible.

Collaboration: Commitment by different partners on a project wherein the partners share equal workloads, goals, responsibilities, and a unified vision of the expected outcome.

Dunning-Krueger Effect: The inability to recognize one's own knowledge deficit.

Faculty Buy-In: The participation of faculty members from a variety of disciplines that rotate in and out of the project yet are necessary to the life and continuation of the project.

Information Literacy: The ability of an individual to source, evaluate, and ethically utilize information.

Interdisciplinary: Different disciplines working together in order to reach a shared goal.

Principal Investigator: The individual who is in charge of the execution of the grant project.

Research Week: An annual event held at Nicholls State University where students and faculty present current research being conducted, participate in poster competitions, and promote research to the university and community.

Research Workshop: A single instructional session held on a predetermined topic relevant to student research or presentation skills to support and promote participation in Research Week.

ENDNOTE

- ¹ The Louisiana Board of Regents serves as the state liaison to Louisiana's accredited, independent institutions of higher education and coordinates the efforts of the state's thirty-four public colleges, universities, and professional schools. The Louisiana Board of Regents also sets statewide standards and represents public higher education before all branches of national government. The Louisiana Board of Regents Sponsored Programs Division administers state and federal programs that provide funds and resources to postsecondary education institutions in Louisiana. For 2013-2014, the Board of Regents Support Fund (BoRSF) sought proposals that targeted the eligible disciplines of astronomy, business, chemistry, education, mathematics, and physics, all of which are disciplines taught at the university.